



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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PAGE:
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AETC News Clips Altus AFB, Okla.



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Oklahomans help with hurricane disaster relief

A Quick Reaction Force from the Oklahoma Army National Guard unit headquartered in Altus and a C-17 from Altus Air Force Base are assisting in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

The Oklahoma National Guard has deployed a 110-member Quick Reaction Force to Louisiana and is preparing to send another 400 troops as part of the 1st Battalion, 171st Field Artillery Regiment, Gov. Brad Henry announced Thursday.

Henry has directed the Oklahoma Military Department to dispatch between 2,000 and 2,500 troops to assist in relief efforts. The majority of these troops will deploy today and through the weekend, the governor said.

Meanwhile, a C-17 assigned to the 58th Airlift Squadron at Altus AFB left at 3:45 a.m. Thursday for Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas, to pick up generators and other supplies, according to Jim Weslowski, public affairs officer for the base.

The C-17 flew those supplies to Keesler AFB, Biloxi, Miss. At Keesler, it picked up students training there and transferred them to Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas.

On Wednesday, the Oklahoma Air National Guard sent an Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron to help stabilize hospital patients in the New Orleans area and assist in their transport to other locations.

Assisting search-and-rescue operations in Louisiana, the Oklahoma National Guard has sent four Black Hawk helicopters and one Chinook helicopter. Four more Chinooks are likely to fly out to the storm-battered region this weekend.

Starting today, a 2,000-soldier joint task force will be dispatched to sections of Louisiana devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Under the leadership of Brig. Gen. Miles Deering, commander of the 45th Infantry Brigade, these troops will help provide security and undertake various missions assigned to them.

The 45th Infantry Brigade is putting together "Task Force Oklahoma." The brigade ordered all of its soldiers to report to their armories early Thursday to prepare vehicles, equipment and supplies to support the hurricane-ravaged areas. The task force will have an estimated 2,200 Oklahoma Guard soldiers from the 45th Infantry Brigade, 45th Field Artillery Brigade and the 90th Troop Command.

The task force will provide additional security assets, search and recovery assets, and numerous other mission support capabilities on an as-needed basis.

Task Force Oklahoma will deploy to Louisiana on Sunday and will remain on station there for at least two weeks, but mission requirements may necessitate a limited number of Oklahoma Guardsmen staying on for more than a month.

Oklahoma's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, said he is proud of the response of the Army and Air National Guard.

The Lawton Constitution

PAGE: 5A

DATE: 06 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

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"They have answered the call to duty with unwavering commitment to their country and their state," he said. "I am very proud of our Guard and the dedication they have demonstrated. They understand the magnitude of their mission, and they are more than ready for the task at hand."

Oklahoma is providing help through an interstate mutual aid agreement, the Emergency Management Compact (EMAC). The Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM) continues to field requests for assistance related to Hurricane Katrina. An OEM human services coordinator will assist with feeding, sheltering and volunteer and donation management issues in Louisiana. An operations staffer of the OEM will assist with Emergency Operations Center activities in Mississippi.

The Oklahoma Wing Civil Air Patrol has two aircraft and two crews on standby to assist with aerial damage assessment.

In addition, 11 area foresters of the Oklahoma De-

partment of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, have been sent to the hurricane-ravaged region to aid in debris removal.

A Disaster Medical Assistance Team is helping provide patient care in Louisiana. Additionally, the Oklahoma Medical Reserve Corps is readying its members to go to the affected areas when called, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency is starting to call up some of the Oklahoma Community Emergency Response Team/Citizen Corps members who responded to last year's hurricanes in Florida.

Many members of the Oklahoma Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster are responding to the needs of hurricane victims. The American Red Cross has sent chapter volunteers and emergency response vehicles to provide food, water and shelter assistance to displaced residents, as well as first responders. It has also opened a shelter in Tulsa for about 100 hurricane victims.

The Salvation Army has

four canteens providing mobile feeding units in Biloxi, Hattiesburg and Wiggins, Miss. In addition, the organization is providing ministerial care and ham radio operators.

The Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Organization, the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the United Methodist Committee on Relief are also providing assistance.

A number of Oklahoma electric-service providers are assisting with the restoration of power throughout the Gulf Coast states. These include Public Service Co. of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Gas & Electric and the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives.

The governor stressed that Oklahomans who want to help hurricane victims should consider making monetary donations to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army or any number of faith-based organizations taking part in relief efforts. A list of disaster relief organizations is available online at www.okvoad.org.



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Local aid makes it to coast aboard AFB cargo plane

BILOXI, MISS. -- With a C-17 jet full of food, water and supplies, and members of the 97th Air Mobility Squadron from Altus Air Force Base flew to the ravaged region of the Gulf Coast on Sunday. Their mission was to alleviate some of the suffering for the desperate residents in Mississippi.

On board were seven pallets of food donated by the people of Altus and one forklift from the Air Force base,

As part of a massive relief effort, the squadron delivered a much-needed payload donated by Jackson County residents. Along with supplies picked up along the way at Little Rock Air Force Base in Arkansas, the entire haul was deposited at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. The food and water will be given out to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. A C-5 jet was also deployed on Sunday to New Orleans from Altus.

"This mission is of particular interest to the community," said AFB's Lt. Colonial Tal Metzger. "We are going to do everything we can to help them out. This is about people helping people."

While the damage to Mississippi has been overshadowed by the dire situation of New Orleans, the devastated coastline was visible as the plane came in for a landing. The supplies delivered by the 97th Squadron is just another step in what will be a long process to get the region back on its feet.

"This is a marathon, not a sprint," Metzger said of the relief effort.

Keesler is adjacent to Biloxi, but was not as heavily as that city. Lt. Col. Patrick Halloran said his unit was able to get the base back to operational status soon after the hurricane ended.

"Overall the base was pretty severely impacted. We were one of the first teams in here. Our job here was to do exactly that, assess how quickly we could open the base. Then open up the flow to it. I would say we are operating at 100 percent right now."

Students from the base were evacuated to Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. Evacuation of civilians will continue for as long as it is needed.

"I'm doing everything I can to help out," said Keesler Staff Sgt. Robert Lupton. "My squadron asked for volunteers, and I stepped up."

While Lupton eagerly volunteered for the evacuation mission, like many soldiers, he has personally had to deal with the devastation of Katrina. He was dealt the same fate as almost all the residents of Biloxi.

"My family and I lost everything," Lupton said. "Our house and all of our possessions are gone. My wife was upset to a point about losing all of her pictures. We have a 2-month-old child. I was not able to recover the baby pictures."

In the week following the rampage of Katrina, criticism was levied at the government for not taking action sooner to help the residents of the Gulf Coast. With kids starving, the elderly dying and gangs looting, there seemed to be no help in sight and people were left to fend for themselves.



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But that changed this weekend as the National Guard and military have been mobilized to form a strong presence in the region. First came the order, then the relief, which began to show up in Mississippi on Thursday. The official death toll in this state had reached 126 on Sunday. That total number of Katrina's victims is expected to reach into the thousands. Along with death has come disease. An outbreak of dysentery has hit Biloxi, which has slowed the evacuation process. The disease has been spread through the drinking of contaminated water.

"We started sheltering folks on (last) Sunday afternoon in preparation for Hurricane Katrina," said Col. Douglas Hayner, vice commander of the 81st training wing. "We sheltered about 6,000 people in seven shelters. We evacuated whole lot more from the local community. It was a lot more severe that we had ever anticipated. Keesler Air Force Base and the surrounding community was completely devastated."

Much of the food and supplies that are coming to the Gulf Coast are being flown on the C-17 Globemaster III or C-5 Galaxy. The C-17 can carry a payload capacity of 170,900 pounds and travel at 450 knots.

"What we really need are things that can lift people's spirit," Hayner said. "Like toys for kids, like phone cards so people can call out. Just moral things. We have enough food and water. We don't have enough of those small things that mean a lot in situations like this."

Altus Air Force Base will be making return trips to Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida and plan to do whatever they are called upon to do to aid in the recovery.

"This is a marathon, not a sprint," said Lt. Colonial Tal Metzger. "We are prepared for the long haul."



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Laughlin AFB, Texas



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DEL RIO NEWS HERALD

Losano Fitness Center unveiled

[By Bill Sontag](#)

Published September 2, 2005, p. 1 (along w/ full-page of photo coverage on p. 6)

Somber well-wishers and proud, sad celebrants listened respectfully Thursday morning as Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano's dedication to duty was recounted at ceremonies unveiling the name of Laughlin Air Force Base's new fitness center.

The Losano Fitness Center and Health and Wellness Center is aptly named for an American hero who personally enjoyed keeping fit.

Thursday afternoon, Roberto Losano Sr. talked about his son's passion for physical fitness.

"He liked swimming, jogging, biking and weight lifting, but he was also an outdoorsman and liked hiking in the mountains," Losano said.

About 400 Air Force officers and enlisted personnel, dignitaries and civic leaders joined several members of the Losano family at the 9 a.m. ceremonies. 1LT Sheila Johnston served as mistress of ceremonies, announcing presentation of the colors and the National Anthem sung by Terra Wade.

Johnston introduced distinguished visitors and Losano family members, as well as representatives of U.S. Representative Henry Bonilla and U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson.

On behalf of Bonilla, constituent liaison Myria Fernandez-Alvarado told the crowd, "This facility in particular is dedicated to the welfare of the airmen stationed here, and it is fitting that it will bear the name of Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano."

Bonilla's letter to Col. Tod Wolters, commander of the 47th Flying Training Wing, went on to describe Losano's heroism, "Despite suffering severe wounds, he continued doing his job by calling in air strikes to save the lives of his comrades. No greater sacrifice can be made for man or country..."

Jesse Jack Hereford, Hutchinson's representative for south Texas, read the senator's letter to Wolters, saying in part, "I share the tremendous pride his family must feel in this recognition for his heroic actions in Afghanistan. He joins an eternal list of American heroes whose names and deeds are forever inscribed in our nation's history."

Capt. Brad Dyer, Losano's commander at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., before the airman's deployment to Afghanistan, is now stationed at Laughlin Air Force Base, a flight commander and instructor pilot in the 85th Flying Training Squadron. Dyer told the audience, "I will remember Raymond not only for the way he died, for the way he lived as well."

Dyer, his wife Heather Ann and infant daughter Andronika were present. "My wife and I think of you as part of our family, and we hope you consider us part of yours, too. We do truly love you guys."

Wolters' message to the audience was also directed to the Losano family seated on the front row, including Losano's wife, Sarah, her children Alorah and Lillian, Roberto Losano Sr., Oralia Losano, Roberto Losano Jr. and Melinda Losano:

Del Rio News

PAGE:

ISSUE DATE: 06 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

Laughlin AFB, Texas



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"There is nothing we here can do to ease his family's burden, to give a wife back her husband, two little girls back their daddy, a mother and father back their son. All we can do is embrace them with this honor. When we name this beautiful building in honor of Raymond Losano, we embrace this family. And we embrace the Losano spirit."

With that Johnston, announced the memorial text as Wolters and the Losano family unveiled a handsome bronze plaque mounted on a support pillar at the entrance of the building.

The plaque described the circumstances of Losano's death, his heroism and included a bas-relief image of his face.

Then Johnston directed the crowd's attention to the top of the north wall of the building as a dark Air Force blue, fabric was hoisted to reveal the new name of the Losano Fitness Center and HAWC. When applause subsided, Johnston invited the guests inside for refreshments and a view of a large-screen slide show of Losano's life.

In the lobby, guests greeted the Losano family, then enjoyed a colorful buffet of pastries, juice and fresh fruit.

In a pleasantly mixed atmosphere of melancholy remembrance and nearly festive salutation, friends, relatives, co-workers and respectful Air Force members hugged, smiled, laughed and cried. Even balmy temperatures in the shade of the north-facing building, contrasted with bright sun at the rear of the assemblage, reinforcing the yin and yang of the morning's mood.

"It was very emotional for us, but very exciting," Losano Sr. said.

Later Thursday afternoon, Del Rio Mayor Dora G. Alcalá could not suppress tears when asked about the morning's events.

"It was and still is very emotional, because this is a family that grew up in our neighborhood that we've known forever – la familia del barrio. You feel the sadness in your heart because someone from your barrio died, but then you're so proud that they made such a sacrifice, and then, for our military to honor this young man in this way ...to bestow this naming is such an honor!"

When the ceremonies ended Thursday morning, fitness enthusiasts in shorts, running shoes and t-shirts passed by the new bronze plaque and under the proud name on the north end of the Losano Fitness Center and HAWC, making their way into the exercise enclave Losano would doubtless have enjoyed himself.

Del Rio News

PAGE:

ISSUE DATE: 06 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

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DEL RIO NEWS HERALD **Air Force to honor fallen Del Rioan**

[By Bill Sontag](#)

Published September 1, 2005, p. 1

Part 1 of 2

Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano died under enemy fire in Afghanistan while on patrol near the Pakistani Border, April 25, 2003. Though more than two years have passed, memories of the jovial, energetic, dedicated young man are still vivid among relatives and friends.

To ensure that the memory of Losano's supreme sacrifice is preserved, Col. Tod Wolters, commander of the 47th Flying Training Wing, Laughlin Air Force Base, presented a small gift and a promise to Roberto Losano on Christmas Eve, 2004.

On Aug. 25, Wolters explained: "This idea came to me when I met Airman Losano's father after my change of command. I was struck by his son's story. Few are ever called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice. That Airman Losano gave his life as he saved his unit is the most heroic act I can imagine."

"He told me, 'Mr. Losano, we're naming the fitness center in honor of your son,'" said Roberto Losano, Aug. 22. Sitting in his living room, flanked by his wife, Oralia, and his niece Kayla Hernandez, Losano spoke in soft, measured tones about his gratitude for Wolters' announcement and recollections of Raymond's last call home.

"We talked to him for about ten minutes on his 24th birthday – when he was there in Afghanistan and we were in Tucson – on April 20th, and we wished him Happy Birthday and Happy Easter," said Losano. His son was shot by Afghani rebels five days later in an ambush while Raymond was deployed with the U.S. Army 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Capt. Brad Dyer, flight commander and instructor pilot in the 85th Flying Training Squadron at Laughlin since 2003, knew Losano and admired his potential. Dyer explained that Losano and Army Priv. 1st Class Jerod Dennis were supporting the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division when their convoy of perhaps a dozen vehicles was caught in crossfire. Both men were killed.

Roberto and Oralia Losano got the stinging news while in Artesia, N.M., returning from Arizona.

For 30 years, Roberto Losano has delivered mail on Laughlin Air Force Base, but neither he nor Oralia have yet seen the sprawling, elegant complex of gymnasium, exercise rooms, swimming pool, and fitness facilities opened recently. Today they will receive their first tour of the 72,000-square-foot building, following ceremonies and unveiling of the facility's new identity.

Oralia Losano admitted her surprise at Wolters' intention to honor her son's memory in this fashion. "I felt very proud and excited," she recalled. "For a first class airman, we were excited, because we thought that might be something just for officers."

Roberto Losano remembered Raymond's adventurous attributes that led him to a satisfying, if too brief, military career. "He always liked fishing and hunting. Sometimes I had to go out looking for him because he was staying out late fishing on San Felipe Creek."

Del Rio News

PAGE:

ISSUE DATE: 06 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

Laughlin AFB, Texas



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“And he always was wanting to make friends with people right away – and not knowing anything about them,” smiled Oralia, saying that she both admired and worried about that side of her son a little. Roberto added, “He just always wanted to help other people, and he would always offer to help.”

Dyer readily agreed with the Losanos’ assessment of their son’s altruistic, upbeat persona. Dyer was Losano’s acting commanding officer of the 20th Air Support Operations Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. When Losano graduated from Terminal Air Control Party technical training in Florida, he requested and received assignment at Pope.

“Pope is the most sought-after base (for such graduates), so when they are selected for it, they’re at the top of their class,” Dyer said Aug. 22. Dyer recalled a Fayetteville, N.C. furniture salesman who had met Losano before his deployment to Afghanistan, and on hearing the news of his death commented, “Yeah, I remember that guy, and he was so excited to be going over there.”

“That was my impression, too,” said Dyer. “He was very excited to go do this mission, and to go do what he was trained to do. What I remember Raymond by is that he was excited to serve – very motivated and willing to make the ultimate sacrifice,” said Dyer.

Dyer and Roberto and Oralia Losano will be joined by many other distinguished visitors at today’s dedication ceremonies by Raymond’s wife, Sarah, and the couple’s two daughters, Lillian and Alorah.

Tomorrow: Ceremonies dedicate a building, remembering Raymond

Del Rio News

PAGE:

ISSUE DATE: 06 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

Sheppard AFB, Texas



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06-Sep 05

Base opens doors

More than 200 Keesler AFB personnel arrive at Sheppard

By Michael Hines/Times Record News
September 2, 2005, Page 1A

They were taken from a flooded Air Force base that had no power, clean water or telephones.

And they weren't all happy about it.

More than 200 Keesler Air Force Base personnel arrived Thursday afternoon at Sheppard Air Force Base days after the Mississippi Gulf Coast base was hit by Hurricane Katrina. And once the Air Force personnel arrived at the Wichita Falls facility - amid the trauma-induced sobs, consoling hugs and relieved cheers for hot meals and hotter showers - there was a little resentment.

It wasn't about the base taking them in.

It was about circumstances taking them away from helping victims.

"I wanted to stay. I'm not very happy to be here," said Emily Wood, a 27-year-old Tyler, Texas, native. "Those people just lost everything."

Wood wanted to join about 50 of her fellow service men and women who got to stay behind and help relief efforts.

Others echoed similar sentiments, part of a range of emotions that poured out from the personnel who had listened to howling, 100-plus mph winds just three days ago.

"It's surreal," Wood said of being in Wichita Falls. "I can't believe I made it from a total disaster to electricity."

Sheppard personnel assured the new arrivals that all would be done to continue making the situation seem less disorienting.

"I had a lot of folks raise their hands say 'Boss, I want to help with this,' " said Maj. Bruce Gooch about preparing for the arrivals.

The air personnel would spend the first day basically getting fed and rested with no specific duties set for upcoming days, said Brig. Gen. James Whitmore, 82nd Training Wing commander.

The aim wouldn't be to continue training, he said.

"The goal is simply to provide them with comfortable living conditions for a short amount of time," he said.

The arrivals were given gift bags filled with towels, toiletries and information about base facilities and events. They would be dispersed to several dorms on campus.

Times Record News

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 06 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Sheppard AFB, Texas



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06-Sep 05

The prospect of coming to Sheppard was great, said Zachary Vines, a 21-year-old Atlanta native.

"We treated it like a roller coaster," he said of the plane ride in, explaining that some Keesler personnel would raise their hands as if riding in an amusement park.

At the same time, the change represents an obstacle for some.

"I was angry. I've already graduated, and I'm ready to go home," said Kristi Borelly, 19, from Trinidad. "I was supposed to be home yesterday on vacation. I have no idea when I'll get to leave now."

That disorientation is the hardest part, many said, particularly since they expect the Sheppard stop to be a pit stop before they go elsewhere.

"I feel like I'm in limbo right now," said Lauren Snyder, 19, from Long Beach, Miss. "I don't know what's going on, I don't know what's going to happen."

What they had known for certain was that things were getting bad Monday.

When Hurricane Katrina hit Biloxi, Miss., the air personnel had already been holed up in shelters.

"We heard the wind and stuff bumping around outside," said Laura Oswalt, 21-year-old Columbus, Miss., native.

Staying at the base meant no amenities, Vines said.

"We had limited water," he said. "I haven't taken a shower in days."

Whitmore said that not long after the hurricane had passed, he contacted Air Force officials. He told them that Sheppard had as many as 4,000 beds that could be used.

"Late last night, I got a phone call," he said. "They took me up on my offer."

The Keesler personnel were told they were leaving at 1 a.m.

"We didn't know what to think," said Julie Martinez, 20-year-old Ohio native. "We didn't know what we were going to do here."

There was little celebration at the time, and part of that owed to knowing how fortunate they were.

"I was thankful I had an MRE to eat; I had a smelly, stinky room from all the water, but at least I had a roof over my head," Wood said.

And others simply had other things on their minds.

"I haven't talked to my sister. I'm not worried about her, but I don't know where she is," Snyder said, explaining that her sister should have been with friends and was likely safe. "My church is gone. It's sad. I feel empty."

Times Record News

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 06 Sep 05



AETC News Clips

Sheppard AFB, Texas



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06-Sep 05

The flight to Wichita Falls took about an hour and 15 minutes. It would be one of possibly as many as three flights into the base. One or two were expected by 8 p.m.

Other bases are helping Keesler. Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., is sending security forces and civil engineers while Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio is expected to take care of 25 seriously ill patients transferred from Keesler Medical Center.

Sheppard could see as many as 11,000 Air Force personnel come in with the capability to accommodate even more.

"I could maintain this level for at least a couple of months," Whitmore said.

Times Record News
PAGE: Internet
DATE: 06 Sep 05